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Chapman Receives \$25 Million Gift for New Performing Arts Center

ORANGE, Calif., May 9, 2009 – Chapman University has received a \$25 million gift that will make possible a new 1,300-seat performing arts center on the campus, Chapman officials announced today. The donors are longtime Orange County residents who wish to remain anonymous.

The gift, announced during Chapman’s annual Sholund Scholarship Concert today, is a challenge donation: the university must raise another \$25 million to match it. University officials are confident this will happen. “We are very grateful that in the midst of this economy, there are visionary supporters of higher education who are making Chapman and the future of our students their priority,” said Chapman President James L. Doti, who called the gift “both extraordinary and transformational; it will mean a new era for the arts at Chapman.”

The gift will allow Chapman to go forward with plans to build a long-hoped-for performing arts center, which will cost around \$50 million. Plans are only in the concept stages now, but will probably feature a mid-sized multipurpose performing arts center of 1,200 seats, with the option to expand to 1,300 seats for performances with no orchestra pit. The center will also include rehearsal space for the more than 700 students enrolled in Chapman’s recently established College of Performing Arts. When completed, it would be the largest university performing arts center in Orange County, and second in size among all halls in the county only to the Orange County Performing Arts Center.

Pfeiffer Partners, a firm skilled in designing new buildings that fit seamlessly into historic city areas, has been chosen as the design architect. The firm has designed many distinguished performing arts centers around the country, including the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts in Anchorage, the Hult Center in Eugene, Oregon and the RiverCenter for the Performing Arts in Columbus, Georgia.

The hall will be used for university performances and productions, including concerts, recitals, operas, musicals, plays, dance performances and Chapman’s annual American Celebration gala, a Broadway-style revue performed by the students that brings in more than \$2 million per year. The facility may also be used for booking professional touring attractions and shows.

Chapman has yet to decide where the center will be located – there are several possible sites on the main campus in Orange or in the newer west campus area on Palm Avenue near Marion Knott Studios, which houses the Chapman film school. The university plans to work closely with the City of Orange at every step in the planning process, and will partner with the city for various events in the hall.